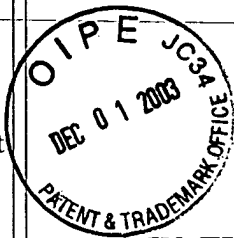


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P A T E N T

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

CONFIRMATION NO. 8726

Applicants : Kazunari SAKATA, et al.

Serial No. : 09/934,756

Art Unit : 3749

Filed : August 23, 2001

Examiner : Jiping LU

For : Vertical Heat Treatment System, Method for Controlling Vertical Heat Treatment System, and Method for Transferring Object To Be Treated

RESPONSE TO PAPER NO. 4 REQUIRING ELECTION OF SPECIES

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir :

This is in reply to the Office Action of November 18, 2003 (Paper No. 4) which required election of a single species. The alleged species are as follows:

Species I corresponding to Figures 1-9,

Species II corresponding to Figures 10-14,

Species III corresponding to Figures 15-28 and,

Species IV corresponding to Figures 29-35.

Applicants elect Species IV, corresponding to Figures 29-35, for examination in this application. Applicants advise that claims 15-21 read on elected Species IV.

Applicants reserve the right to file divisional applications directed to the claims of the non-elected species. In due course, Applicants will attend to any changes to the inventorship or the claim for priority if such is made necessary by the cancellation of non-elected claims.

It is submitted that this application now is in condition for examination on the merits and early action in that regard is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

SMITH, GAMBRELL & RUSSELL, LLP



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Date : December 1, 2003